

West Lafayette Beautification Award

September, 2012

Mike Long

This month's winner demonstrates that a large landscape isn't mandatory to win a beautification award. Mike Long lives in an apartment in Blackbird Farms and for eight years he has brought his neighbors beautiful summer color from his balcony. Each year the plants are slightly different, depending on what bargains he finds shopping locally. When he ran out of floor space on the small balcony which faces east, he lined the railing on three sides with window boxes and allows the flowers to trail down, forming a colorful curtain.

This summer Mike has focused on night-blooming plants which open late in the afternoon with a wonderful fragrance. Hummingbirds have found their way to his balcony and enjoy the lantanas and geraniums. He has used vining plants, including morning glories, cardinal vine and sweet autumn clematis to form a colorful wall from inside and outside. A summer trip to Switzerland introduced him to Swiss Balcony geraniums, which he planted in the window boxes and cascaded down the building. His newest acquisitions which will move indoors in the winter include a rose bush, bougainvillea, and a mandevilla.

Mike is a PhD candidate in horticulture and uses his knowledge of gardening in the different climates of upstate New York, Minnesota and West Lafayette to bring beauty and color to West Lafayette. We appreciate his contribution to his apartment community and hope he continues to garden from his balcony.

